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Dr. Louise McNeill Pease, Ph.D,  
from Fairmont, W.Va. of May 3, 1973.

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About "G.D." - I would very much like to have his Naval records.  
The ship was the U.S.S. Glacier and he went in late 1906 or in the  
early months of 1907.

He was "Yeoman in charge of stores" - "a petty officer" he always  
said. He must have been an enlisted man, for he was chosen to re-  
present the enlisted men and made the speech accepting for the fleet  
kind of YMCA Library?, the gift of Jay Goulds' daughter -  
John Gould.

He made this speech at some big dinner in New York before the  
fleet sailed. Miss. Gould - after his oration - sent him a letter  
asking him to come and see her - But he shipped out of Brooklyn and  
always enjoyed teasing my Mother about what might have happened had  
he called at Gould Mansion

He came home - after some delay in the state of Washington for  
lumber woods - in May 1910.

As you know Glen, he went to the Navy to recover from an acute  
case of alcoholism and the complete wreck of his life - he had been  
disbarred from his law practice - had lost everything. He came home  
cured and started teaching school and helping whiskey-prone kids.

I heard him preach a sermon on his experiences once - in a big  
church, for he always very open about it around town - every body  
knew it anyway His Navy years meant much to him as he tried to  
enlist again in 1917 - much to Mama's relief. They turned him down  
as being too old.



## THE SAILOR

My father at the last was blind,  
And yet forever he could find  
Continents cradled in his mind—  
Continents, islands, shores, and grails  
Far in the distance. Now he sails  
Outward forever through the gales—

I stood beside him the day he went;  
The wind came running; the canvas tent  
Over his grave on the hill was rent  
From off its moorings; it billowed fast,  
And so my father went forth at last  
Over his oceans of the vast

Continents, islands, shores, and seas—  
My father sails through Eternities.



## Louise McNeill

In becoming one of Appalachia's most respected poets, Louise McNeill sang with pride about the mountain heritage of the region's residents.

Now she traces their consciousness from pioneer days to atomic frontiers and looks to the future with uncertainty in her new book of poems, "Paradox Hill: From Appalachia to Lunar Shore."

Her book was published recently by McClain Printing Company of Parsons for the West Virginia University Library with private funds made available through the WVU Foundation, Inc. Copies may be ordered for \$4.50 each, plus 50 cents for postage and handling, from the Book Store, Mountainlair, West Virginia University, Morgantown, W. Va. 26506.

But who is Louise McNeill that anyone should listen to her prophecies or share her pride and fear?

She's a wife and mother, and history teacher at Fairmont State College. But more than that she's a person with strong convictions about herself, her heritage, her homeland and its future. And she's able to translate these convictions into compelling poetic rhythms.

Her name is well-known to the editors and publishers of respected national literary magazines such as Saturday Review and Atlantic Monthly, which have published her poems.

During the 1950s, she was a frequent contributor to The Saturday Evening Post, Ladies Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, Harpers and other magazines.

Miss McNeill was born and reared on a mountain farm in Pocahontas County, where her family has lived since pre-revolutionary days. She attended the two-room schoolhouse where her father taught. And she received her bachelor's degree in English from Concord College, her master's degree from Miami University of Ohio; and a doctorate in history from West Virginia University. Why a doctorate in history?

"It was for a very practical reason," she recalled. "When I wanted to get my doctorate, WVU didn't offer one in English."

Practicality is one of her first considerations, whether applied to finishing her education or writing poetry. Miss McNeill never has enshrined herself in an ivory tower. She feels that a poet can work as practically as a bricklayer or someone who bakes a loaf of bread. This philosophy shows in her work.

"I believe poetry should be useful," Miss McNeill said. "It can be useful to the spirit, useful to relieve the mind and useful to society. Of course, it's useful to the poet, too, but it should go beyond that."

Miss McNeill says serious poetry has become confessionalist and that ballads, such as Bob Dylan's protest songs, are replacing poetry in one area. Some of her poems, like Dylan's deal with the public's fears and social issues.

"I feel—and this makes me quite quaint among most poets today—that



poetry can deal validly with social criticism. I'm not a protestant, but I'm not ashamed to try something along this line. I see no reason for poets to be so fine fingered."

Academians, and sometimes poets themselves, often attempt to set down rules for poetic subject matter. Miss McNeill objects. She says she never places limits on what poetry should or can deal with.

"I once heard Allen Tate say that no one should write a poem about his mother. So I have deliberately written one about mine," she said.

"Paradox Hill" is divided into three sections—"Appalachia," "Scattered Leaves" and "Lunar Shores." Each deals with aspects of Appalachian life... from the traditional to the futuristic.

The book is full of the kind of poetry that Stephen Vincent Benet, in his foreword to an earlier collection of her poems, "Gauley Mountain, also published by McClain Printing Co., described as simple, direct and forceful. Many of the poems are laced with humor, some are tinged with sorrow, others are filled with outright rage.

Many of the stories spun in Miss McNeill's ballads were told to her by her father, Douglas McNeill, who was a writer, teacher and one-time sailor. He too wrote about West Virginia in a volume of short stories called, "The Last Forest."

Sometimes she is inspired by conversations she hears in public places. Two of the most poignant poems in "Paradox Hill" are entitled "Overheard on a Bus."

At the age of 18, Miss McNeill began to write seriously, and two years later her first poems were published in a Dallas, Tex., magazine, Kalliedograph. Since then, she has published three volumes of poems and several short stories.

"I often will write a poem in a few hours," she observed. "The poems that turn out right are the ones that are written rapidly. Sometimes if I fail to get it down the first time, I can go back to it later but that doesn't happen very often."

She is a great believer in form. When she decided to write seriously, she studied form, pattern and rhythm. She rarely writes in free verse form.

Miss McNeill works very hard at finding the right words and perfecting the images in her poems. She throws away two of every three poems that she writes.

Dr. Ruel E. Foster, chairman of the WVU Department of English, thinks one of Miss McNeill's greatest virtues is her complete lack of affectation.

"You'll find none of the big, dramatic rhetoric of Shakespeare or Milton in her poetry," Dr. Foster said. "She's contemporary, yet you'll find none of the tortured rhetoric that many modern poets fall prey to.

"She is part of a great tradition in American poetry," he observed.

Tribute To Louise McNeill  
Pease, West Virginia Poet  
Laureate

by Rep. Nick Joe Rahall, D-WV

Louise McNeill Pease, West Virginia poet laureate, passed away at the age of 82. Ms. Pease, a native of Pocahontas County was sixteen when she first started writing poetry and dedicated most of her writing to the coal miners and the people of Appalachia. Her talent and her commitment to West Virginia state issues led then-Governor Jay Rockefeller, in 1971, to declare Pease West Virginia poet laureate, a title she kept till her death.

Early in her career, she sold poems to The Saturday Evening Post, for \$5 a line. In 1931, she published her first collection of poems, "Mountain White." Since then, she has published six other books. Her last book, "Hill Daughter: New and Selected Poems," was published in 1991.

Ms. Pease graduated from Concord College in Athens, WV and afterward, taught History and English. She received a master's degree from Miami University in Ohio and earned a doctorate from West Virginia University in Morgantown. She started teaching in a one-room schoolhouse and later became a professor at Potomac State College and Fairmont State College, before ending her thirty year career in teaching. While she was teaching, Ms. Pease also concentrated on writing fiction and poems for magazines.

Ms. Pease has been called "a true daughter of the Mountain State." Her poems about coal miners are regarded by many as a way to study and learn about West Virginia history. Ms. Pease's intellect and spiritual beliefs also can be detected through her words; in 1991, she stated, "I suppose all my books are touched by the earth, the feeling that I'm going to be bound to the earth. I may go on a long journey, but I will be back to the earth."

West Virginia has lost a truly admirable and talented woman who articulated the joys and challenges of Appalachian with such emotion that anyone who reads her poems will experience the passions of Appalachia's people. Louise McNeill Pease will be greatly missed.

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